

She and Allan *By Sir H. Rider Haggard*

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hard facts of life of sufficient interest as they stand.

So it came about that the more Good bothered me to read this particular romance, the more I determined that I would do nothing of the sort. Being a persistent person, however, when he went away about ten o'clock at night, he deposited it by my side, under my nose, indeed, so that it might not be overlooked. Thus it came about that I could not help seeing some Egyptian hieroglyphics in an oval on the cover, also the title, and underneath it, your own name, my friend, all of which excited my curiosity, especially the title, which was brief and enigmatic, consisting, indeed, of one word, "She."

I picked up the work, and on opening it the first thing my eye fell upon was a picture of a veiled woman, the sight of which made my heart stand still, so painfully did it remind me of a certain veiled woman whom once it had been my fortune to meet. Glancing from it to the printed page, one word seemed to leap at me. It was *Kor!* Now, of veiled women there are plenty in the world, but were there also two *Kors*?

Then I turned to the beginning and began to read. This happened in the Autumn, when the sun does not rise till about six, but it was broad daylight before I ceased from reading, or rather rushing through that book.

Oh! what was I to make of it? For here in its pages (to say nothing of old Billal and those gloomy Amahagger scoundrels) once again I found myself face to face with *She-who-commands*, now rendered as *She-who-must-be-obeyed*, which means much the same thing; yes, with Ayesha the lovely, the wise, the changeable and the imperious.

Moreover, the tale filled up many gaps in my own limited experiences of that enigmatical being, who was half divine (though, I think, rather wicked, or at any rate unmoral in her way), and yet a woman. It is true that it showed her in lights somewhat different from those in which she had presented herself to me, but the substratum of her character was the same, or rather of her characters, for of these she seemed to have several in a single body, as she said of herself, "not One but Many and not Here but Everywhere."

Moreover, I found the story of Kallikrates, which I had set down as a mere falsehood invented for my bewilderment, expanded and explained—or rather not explained, since, perhaps that she might deceive, to me she had spoken of this Kallikrates without enthusiasm as a handsome, empty-headed person to whom, because of some indiscretion of her youth, she was bound by an evil destiny, and whose return—to her sorrow—she must await. Also I found other things of which I knew nothing, such as the *Fire of Life*, with its fatal gift of indefinite existence, though it is true that, like the giant Rezu, whom Uloporas defeated, she did talk of a "Cup of Life" that might have been offered to my lips, had I been politic, bowed the knee and shown more faith in her and her supernatural pretensions.

Lastly, I saw the story of her end, and as I read it I wept; yes, I confess I wept, although I feel sure she will return again. Now I understood why she had quailed and even seemed to shrivel when, in my last interview with her, stung beyond endurance by her sarcasms, I had suggested that even for her, with all her powers, Fate might reserve one of its shrewdest blows. Some prescience had told her that if the words seemed random, Truth spoke through my lips, although, and this was the worst of it, she did not know what weapon would deal the stroke or when and where it was doomed to fall.

I was amazed, I was overcome, but as I closed that book I made up my mind, first, that I would continue to preserve absolute silence as to Ayesha and my private dealings with her, and secondly that I would not cause my manuscript to be destroyed. I did not feel that I had any right to do so, in view of what had been already published to the world. There let it lie, to appear one day, or not to appear, as might be fated. Meanwhile my lips were sealed. I would give Good back his book without comment and—buy another copy!

ALLAN QUATERMAIN.

The Grange, Yorkshire.

CHAPTER I.

The Talisman.

I THINK it was the old Egyptians, a very wise people, probably, indeed, much wiser than we know, for in the closure of their ample centuries they had time to think out things, who declared that each individual personality was made up of six or seven different elements, although I think the Bible only allows us three, namely, body, soul and spirit. The body that the man or woman wore, if I understand their theory aright, which perhaps I, an ignorant person, do not, was but a kind of sack or fleshy covering containing the different principles. Or maybe it did not contain them at all, but was simply a house, as it were, in which they lived from time to time and seldom all together, although one or more of them was present continually, as though to keep the place warmed and aired.

This is but a casual illustrative suggestion, for what right have I, Allan Quatermain, out of my little reading and probably erroneous deductions, to form any judgment as to the theories of the old Egyptians? Still, these, as I understand them, suffice to furnish me with a text that man is not one, but many, in which connection it may be remembered that often in

Scripture he is spoken of as being the home of many demons, seven, I think, and, to come to a far different example, that the Zulus talk of their witch-doctors as being inhabited by "a multitude of spirits."

Anyhow, of one thing I am quite sure, we are not always the same. Different personalities actuate us at different times. In one hour passion of this sort or the other is our lord; in another we are reason itself. In one hour we follow the basest appetites; in another we hate them, and the spirit, arising through our mortal mark, shines within or above us like a star. In one hour our desire is to kill and spare not; in another we are filled with the holiest compassion even toward an insect or a snake, and ready to forgive like a god. Everything rules us in turn, to such an extent, indeed, that sometimes one begins to wonder whether we really rule anything.

Now, the reason of all this homely is that I, Allan, the most practical and unimaginative of persons, just a homely half-educated hunter and trader, who chances to have seen a good deal of the particular little world in which my lot was cast, at one period of my life became the victim of spiritual longings.

I am a man who has suffered great bereavements in my time, such as have seared my soul, since perhaps because of my rather primitive and simple nature, my affections are very strong. I can never for-

thing like it) "says that all your stomach troubles come from the gums. You must have your teeth attended to instantly."

As my teeth were excellent at that time and I never suffer from gum boils, this reply astonished me very much, until I remembered that the man who had told me about the medium was a dentist by trade. Then I saw light.

Well, that is what I got for my guinea's worth of search into the Unseen.

My queer and perhaps unwholesome longing, however, remained with me and would not be abated. I consulted a clergyman of my acquaintance, a good and spiritually minded man, but he could only shrug his shoulders and refer me to the Bible, saying, quite rightly, I doubt not, that with what it reveals I ought to be contented.

Then I read certain mystical books which were recommended to me, that were full of fine words, undiscoverable in a pocket dictionary, but really took me no forwarder, since in them I found nothing that I could not have invented myself, although while I was actually studying them they seemed to convince me. I even tackled Swedenborg, or rather samples of him, for he is very copious, but without satisfactory results. Then I gave up the business.

ter to me, which no one else seems able to do."

"Oh!" laughed Zikali again, "what do my ears hear? Am I, the poor Zulu cheat, asked to show that which is hidden from all the wisdom of the great White People?"

"The question is," I answered with irritation, "not what you are asked to do, but what you can do."

"That I do not know yet, Macumazahn. What spirits do you desire to see? If that of a woman called Mameena is one of them, I think that perhaps I whom she loved!"

"She is not one of them, Zikali. Moreover, if she loved you, you paid back her love with death."

"Which perhaps was the kindest thing I could do, Macumazahn, for reasons that you may be able to guess, and others with which I will not trouble you. But if not hers, whose? Let me look, let me look! Why, there seem to be two of them, head wives, I mean, and I thought that white men only took one wife. Also a multitude of others; their faces float up in the water of your mind. An old man with gray hair, little children, perhaps they were brothers and sisters, and some who may be friends. Also very clear indeed that Mameena

mountain, and I have never seen her—in the flesh."

"Then how can you talk of what you have never seen?"

"In the same way, Macumazahn, that your priests talk of what they have never seen, because they, or a few of them, have knowledge of it. I will tell you a secret. All seers who live at the same time, if they are great, commune with each other because they are akin and their spirits meet in sleep or dreams. Therefore I know of this Mameena who for thousands of years has lain in the northern caves, and humble though I am, she knows of me."

"Quite so," I said, yawning, "but perhaps, Zikali, you will come to the point of the spear. What of her? How is she named, and if she exists will she help me?"

"I will answer your question backwards, Macumazahn. I think that she will help you if you help her. In what way I do not know, because, although witch-doctors sometimes work without pay, as I am doing now, Macumazahn, witch-doctors never do. As for her name, the only one that she has among our company is 'Queen,' because she is the first of all of them and the most beautiful among women. For the rest, I can tell you nothing except that she has always been and I suppose, in this shape or in that, will always be while the world lasts, because she has found the secret of life unending."

"You mean that she is an immortal, Zikali?" I answered with a smile.

"I do not say that, Macumazahn, because my little mind cannot shape the thought of immortality. But when I was a babe,

As a matter of fact, whatever may have been the reason, I never forgot any detail of that extremely intricate map.

"That big river must be the Zambesi," I stuttered, "and even then the mountain of your Queen, if it be her mountain, is far away, and how can I come there alone?"

"I don't know, Macumazahn, though perhaps you might do so in company. At least, I believe that in the old days people used to travel to the place, since once I have heard a great city stood there, which was the heart of a mighty empire."

Now I picked up my ears, for though I believed nothing of Zikali's story of a wonderful Queen, I was always intensely interested in past civilizations and their relics. Also I knew that old Zikali's knowledge was extensive and peculiar, however he came by it, and I did not think that he would lie to me in this matter. Indeed, to tell the truth, then and there I made up my mind that if it were in any way possible, I would attempt this journey.

"How did people get to the city, Zikali?"

"By sea, I suppose, Macumazahn, but I think that you will be wise not to try that road, since I believe that on the sea side the marshes are now impassable, and I think you will be safer on your feet."

"You want me to go on this adventure, Zikali. Why? For I know you never do anything without motive."

"Oh! Macumazahn, you are clever and see deeper into the trunk of a tree than most. Yes, I want you to go for three reasons. First, that you may satisfy your soul on certain matters, and I would help you. Secondly, because I want to satisfy mine, and, thirdly, because I know that you will come back safe to be a prop to me in things that will happen in days unborn. Otherwise I would have told you nothing of this story, since it is necessary to me that you should remain living beneath the sun."

"Have done, Zikali. What is it that you desire?"

"Oh! a great deal that I shall get, but chiefly two things, so with the rest I will not trouble you. First, I desire to know whether these dreams of mine of a wonderful white witch-doctor, or witch, and my converse with her are indeed more than dreams. Next, I would learn whether certain plots of mine at which I have worked for years will succeed."

"What plots, Zikali, and how can my taking this distant journey tell you anything about them?"

"You know them well enough, Macumazahn; they have to do with the overthrow of a royal house that has worked me bitter wrong. As to how your journey can help me, why, thus: You shall promise to me to ask of this Queen whether Zikali, Opener of Roads, shall triumph or be overthrown in that on which he has set his heart."

"As you seem to know this witch so well why do you not ask her yourself, Zikali?"

"To ask is one thing, Macumazahn. To get an answer is another. I have asked in the watches of the night, and the reply was, 'Come hither and perchance I will tell you, Queen.' I said, 'how can I come save in the spirit, who am an ancient and a crippled dwarf, scarcely able to stand upon my feet?' 'Then send a messenger, Wizard and see that he is white, for of black savages I have seen more than enough. Let him bear a token also that he comes from you, and tell me of it in your sleep. Moreover, let that token be something of power which will protect him on the journey.'

"Such is the answer that comes to me in my dreams, Macumazahn."

"Well, what token will you give me, Zikali?"

He groped about in his robe and produced a piece of ivory the size of a large chessman that had a hole in it, through which ran a plaited cord of the stiff hairs from an elephant tail. On this article, which was of a rusty-brown color, he breathed, then, having whispered to it for a while, handed it to me.

I took the talisman, for such I guessed it to be, idly enough, held it to the light to examine it, and started back so violently that almost I let it fall. I do not quite know why I started, but I think it was because some influence seemed to leap from it to me. Zikali started also and cried out:

"Have a care, Macumazahn. Am I young that I can bear being dashed to the ground?"

"What do you mean?" I asked, still staring at the thing which I perceived to be a most wonderfully fashioned likeness of the old dwarf himself as he appeared before me crouched upon the ground. There were the deepest eyes, the great head, the toad-like shape, the long hair, all.

"It is a clever carving, is it not, Macumazahn? I am skilled in that art, you know, and therefore can judge of carvings."

"Yes, I know," I answered, bethinking me of another statuette of his which he had given me on the morrow of the death of her from whom it was modelled. "But what of the thing?"

"Macumazahn, it has come down to me through the ages, for as you may have heard, all great doctors when they die pass on their wisdom and something of their knowledge to another doctor of spirits who is still living on the earth, that nothing may be lost, or as little as possible, also that to such likenesses as these may be given the strength of him or her from whom they were shaped."

Now I bethought me of the old Egyptians and their Ka statues, of which I had read, and that these statues, magically charmed and set in the tombs of the departed, were supposed to be inhabited everlastingly by the doubles of the dead endowed with more power even than ever they had in life. But of this I said nothing to Zikali, thinking that it would take too much explanation, though I wondered very much how he had come by the same idea.

"Moreover, by a clever use of some hypnotic or mesmeric power, this strange woman had feigned to transport me to some places beyond the earth and in the Hall of Hades to show me what is veiled from the eyes of man."

whom you do not wish to see. Well, Macumazahn, this is unfortunate, since she is the only one whom I can show you, or rather put you in the way of finding. Unless indeed there are other Kaffir women."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean, Macumazahn, that only black feet travel on the road which I can open; over those in whom ran white blood I have no power."

"Then it is finished," I said, rising again and taking a step or two toward the gate.

"Come back and sit down, Macumazahn. I did not say so. Am I the only ruler of magic in Africa, which I am told is a big country?"

I came back and sat down, for my curiosity, a great falling with me, was excited. "Thank you, Zikali," I said, "but I will have no dealings with more of your witch-doctors."

"No, no, because you are afraid of them; quite without reason, Macumazahn, seeing that they are all cheats except myself. I am the last who have wisdom, the rest are stuffed with lies, as Chaka found out when he killed every one of them whom he could catch. But perhaps there might be a white doctor, who would have rule over white spirits."

"If you mean missionaries," I began hastily.

"No, Macumazahn, I do not mean your praying men, who are cast in one mould and measured with one rule, and say what they are taught to say, not thinking for themselves."

"Some think, Zikali."

"Yes, and then the others fall on them with big sticks. The real priest is he to whom the spirit comes, not he who feeds upon its wrappings, and speaks through a mask carved by his father's father. I am a priest like that, which is why all my fellowships have hated me."

"If so you have paid back their hate, Zikali, but cease to cast round the lion like a timid hound, and tell me what you mean. Of whom do you speak?"

"That is the trouble, Macumazahn. I do not know. This lion, or rather lioness, lies hid in the caves of a very distant

which is far ago, she had lived so long that scarce would she know the difference between then and now, and already in her breast was all wisdom gathered. I know it, because, although, as I have said, we have never seen each other, at times we talk together in our sleep, for thus she shares her loneliness, and I think, though this may be but a dream, that last night she told me to send you on to her to seek an answer to certain questions which you would put to me to-day."

Now I grew angry, and asked:

"Why does it please you to fool me, Zikali, with such talk as this? If there is any truth in it, show me where the woman called Queen lives and how I am to come to her."

The old wizard took up the little assegai which he had offered to me and with its blade raked out ashes from the fire which always burned in front of him, while he did so talking to me, as I thought, in a random fashion, perhaps to distract my attention, of a certain white man whom he said I should meet upon my journey and of his affairs, also of other matters, none of which interested me much at the time.

These ashes he patted down flat and then on them drew a map with the point of his spear, making grooves for streams, certain marks for bush and forest, wavy lines for water and swamps and little heaps for hills. When he had finished it all he bade me come round the fire and study the picture, across which by an afterthought he drew a wandering furrow with the edge of the assegai to represent a river, and gathered the ashes in a lump at the northern end to signify a large mountain.

"Look at it well, Macumazahn," he said, "and forget nothing, since if you make this journey and forget, you die. No, no, need to copy it in that book of yours, for, see, I will stamp it on your mind."

Then suddenly he gathered up the hot ashes in a double handful and threw them into my face, muttering something as he did so and adding aloud:

"There, now you will remember."

"Certainly I shall," I answered, coughing, "and I beg that you will not play such a joke upon me again."

get those whom I have loved and whom I believe to have loved me. For you know in our vanity some of us are apt to hold that certain people with whom we have been intimate upon the earth really did care for us, and, in our still greater vanity—or should it be called madness?—to imagine that they still care for us after they have left the earth and entered on some new state of society and surroundings which, if they exist, inferentially are much more congenial than any they can have experienced here.

At times, however, cold doubts strike us as to this matter, of which we long to know the truth. Also behind looms a still blacker doubt, namely, whether they live at all.

For some years of my lonely existence these problems haunted me day by day, till at length I desired above everything on earth to lay them at rest in one way or another. Once at Durban I met a man who was a spiritualist, to whom I confided a little of my perplexities. He laughed at me and said that they could be settled with the greatest ease. All I had to do was to visit a certain local medium, who for a fee of one guinea would tell me everything I wanted to know.

Although I rather grudged the guinea, being more than usually hard up at the time, I called upon this person, a water-eyed individual in a dusky room, so wrapped up with a peculiar garment which looked like a moth-eaten Persian rug, that to this moment I do not know his or her sex, and was told in a hollow voice to write what I wished to learn upon a piece of paper and then burn it at a spirit lamp which stood in a corner of the room.

This sounded genuine enough, since if I burned what I wrote obviously it could not be read by the medium. Although then I wondered why I should be put to the trouble of writing anything. So I obeyed the instructions, setting down such a deal that I heard the medium begin to fidget and yawn.

After the manuscript had been reduced to ashes he or she became seized with a kind of fit which really alarmed me, then snatching up a pencil, wrote something rapidly on a sheet of paper in a jerky fashion and without looking at it, and throwing the same at me, remarked in the same hollow voice:

"The spirits have been pleased to answer your inquiries. Read the writing without on this day week. The fee is one guinea, and I guess, because of the promptitude of the reply, I ought to make it two."

I read it—not a week later, but at once—that is, as soon as I was outside the door. To the best of my recollection it ran thus:

"The great healing spirit, Panthechnicon" (I think that was his name, or some-

Some months later I was in Zululand, and being near the Black Kloof, where he dwelt, I paid a visit to my acquaintance of whom I have written elsewhere, the wonderful and ancient dwarf, Zikali, known as "The Thing that should never have been born," also more commonly among the Zulus as "Opener of Roads." When we had talked of many things connected with the state of Zululand and its politics, I rose to leave for my wagon, since I never cared for sleeping in the Black Kloof if it could be avoided.

"Is there nothing else that you want to ask me, Macumazahn?" asked the old dwarf, tossing back his long hair and looking at me—I had almost written through—me.

I shook my head.

"That is strange, Macumazahn, for I seem to see something written on your mind—something to do with spirits."

Then I remembered all the problems that had been troubling me, although in truth I had never thought of propounding them to Zikali.

"Ah! it comes back, does it?" he exclaimed, reading my thought. "Out with it, then, Macumazahn, while I am in a mood to answer, and before I grow tired, for you are an old friend of mine and will so remain till the end, many years hence, and if I can serve you I will."

I filled my pipe and sat down again upon the stool of carved red-wood which had been brought for me.

"You are named 'Opener of Roads,' are you not, Zikali?" I said.

"Yes, the Zulus have always called me that, since before the days of Chaka. But what of names, which often enough mean nothing at all?"

"Only that I want to open a road, Zikali, that which runs across the River of Death."

"Oh!" he laughed. "It is very easy, and snatching up a little assegai that lay beside him, he proffered it to me, adding, 'Be brave now and fell on that.' Then before I have counted sixty the road will be wide open, but whether you will see anything on it I cannot tell you."

Again I shook my head and answered: "It is against our law. Also while I still live I desire to know whether I shall meet certain others on that road after my time has come to cross the River. Perhaps you who deal with spirits can prove the mat-

